

January 15, 1970

MEMORANDUM

TO: Boston Redevelopment Authority

FROM: John D. Warner, Director

SUBJECT: Zoning Commission

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Re: Text Amendment Application No. 14  
Back Bay Federation for Community  
Development

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Section 18-2, Conformity with Existing Building Alignment provides for averaging the setbacks of the existing buildings in a block to establish the minimum front yard of a given lot, instead of requiring the front yard specified in Table B of Section 13. This averaging could result in a larger or smaller front yard according to prevailing conditions. This provision now covers only districts in which a minimum front yard is required; these districts are the S, R, H, L-.5, L-1 and M-1 Districts. The districts where no front yards are required are L-2, M-2 through 8 and all B, W and I Districts.

The proposed amendment would extend the provisions of Section 18-2 to B-4, B-8 and B-10 Districts. These districts contain Boylston and Newbury Streets which have well established front building lines which are set back from the lot lines. Scattered owners, particularly on Boylston Street, have extended their buildings beyond the existing facades. These protrusions are frequently unsightly in themselves, they break the continuity of the building line, and on Boylston Street they interfere with pedestrian traffic flow by reducing the sidewalk depth in a haphazard fashion. The purpose of this amendment is to reinforce existing building lines by requiring front yards in those blocks in the B-4, B-8 and B-10 Districts where front yards now exist. The amendment would have no effect on blocks which are now built up to the street line, or on blocks entirely occupied by only one or two buildings.

There are L-2, B-1 and B-2 Districts in the Back Bay, the Fenway, the South End and the South Cove which have situations similar to those of Newbury and Boylston Streets where row houses have been converted to business uses with irregular protrusions of store fronts into front yards. To protect these front yards the Department recommends that the provision of Section 18-2 be extended to all Business Districts instead of just B-4, B-8 and B-10 Districts. Preliminary examination of the additional areas which would be involved have uncovered no instance in which such provision would have unexpected or adverse effects. The Planning Department feels that uniform setbacks are desirable in all business districts



The second change proposed by the amendment is to alter the method of calculating the required front yard depth from an average of the depths of nearby front yards to a modal, or most frequently occurring depth. The purpose of this change is to strengthen the prevailing building line. Averaging can lead to establishing a yard depth which conforms to no other setback within the block. This change is recommended.

Another minor change is establishing a standard front yard for an entire block frontage, instead of counting only those buildings within 150 feet of a given lot. This is another step which strengthens a uniform yard depth within a block, and is recommended.

The Planning Department recommends that the Boston Redevelopment Authority approve the proposed amendment, provided that the provisions of Section 18-2 be extended to cover all business districts instead of only B-4, B-8 and B-10 districts, and with some minor changes in wording.

VOTED: That in regard to Text Amendment Application No. 14, sponsored by the Back Bay Federation for Community Development, to extend the provisions of Section 18-2 Conformity with Existing Building Alignment to B-4, B-8 and B-10 Districts, and to change the method of establishing front yards provided for in said Section 18-2, and to make certain other related changes in Sections 13-1 and 18-1, the Boston Redevelopment Authority recommends approval, with the proviso that the phrase "all B-4, B-8 and B-10 districts" be changed to "all Business Districts", and that other changes be made in the wording of the amendment, to read as follows:  
By amending Table B of Section 13-1 of the Boston Zoning Code by adding to the column entitled "Front Yard Minimum Depth Feet" the word "fn. 8" just below the column title and adding at the bottom of that Table a footnote 8 to read as follows" (8) see Section 18-2."  
By amending Section 18-1 of the Boston Zoning Code by adding in the third line after the words "13-1" and before the comma, the words "or required in Section 18-2;" and by removing the comma after the word "use" in the fourth line and inserting a comma after the word "specified" in that line; and by striking

the word "average" in the eighth line of that section.

By amending Section 18-2 of the Boston Zoning Code by striking out present text of that Section and by inserting in place thereof the following:

Section 18-2. Where a minimum depth of front yard is specified in Table B of Section 13-1 and within all Business Districts, if within a block there exist two or more buildings, then instead of the minimum depth specified in Table B of Section 13-1, if any, the minimum depth of the front yard for any lot in the block shall be that depth which occurs most frequently as measured in linear feet of front yard widths along the street line.



